



**DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling**

**For Your Information...**

## Waste Reduction at Home

Nobody likes taking out the trash, right? Fortunately, there are lots of ways you can reduce the amount of waste you make at home.

You know the three Rs. The waste management trinity – reduce, reuse, recycle – outlines not only the options but also the order of importance of these waste management options. Recycling is last because it should be your last option. Reduce and reuse – avoid making waste in the first place and you will have less to recycle.

Changing your habits is the key. Think about ways you can create less waste. Waste reduction is an ideal solid waste solution.

### Reduce your paper trail.

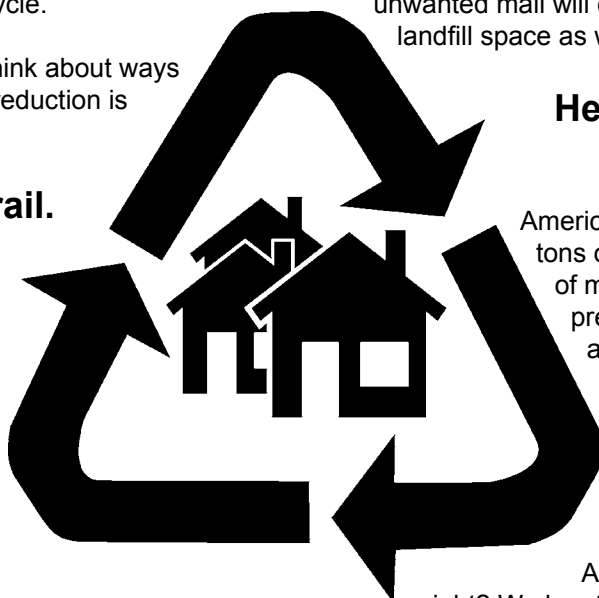
At home, a big part of what you throw away is paper. A big part of that paper is what you get in the mail everyday – unwanted and unwelcome advertising mail. How big? Americans received about 5.4 million tons of advertising mail in 2003 according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). Of that amount, about 3.65 million tons was thrown away.

Do your part – reduce the amount of unwanted mail that you receive at home. To remove your name from mailing lists, simply send a postcard or letter that includes your name, home address and signature to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512-0643. There is no charge for the service. For more information and other ways to register, visit [www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist](http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist).

You also can stop mailings of credit card offers by calling toll-free **1-888-5-OPT-OUT**. Your request will reach the major national credit card bureaus. You must have your social security number ready – they will ask for it to confirm your identity.

Not all companies use these national systems to purge their mailing lists. If you are still receiving unwanted mail, just contact individual senders and ask them to remove your name from their mailing list. Depending on the company, you can send your request by mail, e-mail or phone.

Why bother? Why just not recycle the unwanted mail? Recycling unwanted mail is fine, but reducing the flow of unwanted mail will conserve natural resources, save landfill space as well as save you time and money.



### Here's food for thought. Compost, too.

Americans generated about 27.6 million tons of food waste – uneaten portions of meals and trimmings from food preparation in kitchens, cafeterias and restaurants – in 2003 according to the U.S. EPA. That's about 189 pounds per person per year. It's the third largest part of the nation's municipal solid waste stream.

Admit it, you waste food at home, right? We buy too much. We prepare too much. We waste too much by letting fresh food go bad. Stop it. Plan meals and create a list of what you need before you go to the grocery store. Donate excess canned goods to a food bank. You also can reduce food waste by composting fruit, vegetable and other specific food scraps. For more information see the "FYI: Backyard Composting" fact sheet.

### Recycle your grass.

Did you know that yard trimmings make up the second largest segment of the nation's waste stream – about 28.6 million tons in 2003 according to the U.S. EPA. You can help reduce that by recycling your grass. Say what?

**DID YOU KNOW?** In South Carolina, each of us throws away about 4.5 pounds of municipal solid waste – household garbage - every day. That means each of us makes more than 1,600 pounds of garbage each year.

Grasscycling is simply leaving the clippings on your lawn instead of composting or disposing of them. Grasscycling saves time and money, is good for the environment and, of course, reduces waste. For more information, see the "FYI: Grasscycling" fact sheet.

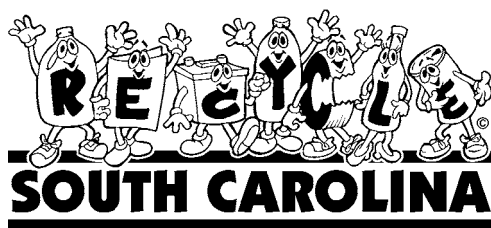
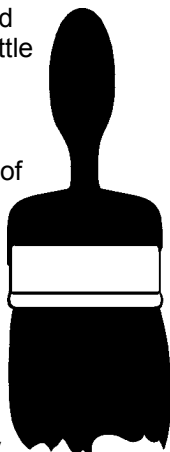
## Don't spend cash for trash.

You don't want to buy garbage, right? Well, depending on what products you buy, that may be what you are doing. Don't buy stuff that is disposable, of poor quality or over packaged. Packaging waste, for example, makes up more than 30 percent of the nation's waste stream – and you pay for it. Buy products in bulk containers such as dog food, cereal and paper products. Buy concentrates with less packaging such as detergents and cleaners. Buying in bulk and concentrates can save you money and reduce waste. You also won't have to go to the store as often. Buy durable products that last. Buy recycled. Buy products made from recycled content materials. Buy products and packaging that can be recycled in your community. Bottom line? Buy only what you need. Use what you buy.

## The Color of Money

You can reduce paint waste at home and perhaps save money if you take just a little time and do the math. Before you begin a painting project, measure the room. Calculate the area to be painted (height X width = total square feet). One gallon of paint covers about 400 square feet.

To prevent paint from drying, cover the paint can (use the original container) with plastic wrap, replace the lid securely and store upside down. Protect your paint from freezing. Use leftover paint for touch-up jobs, smaller projects or as a primer. If you absolutely have no other use for leftover paint, find someone who can use it, give it to a community group or contact your recycling coordinator.



## Reduce by reusing.

Reusing items – by repairing them, finding new uses for them, donating them to community group or selling them – reduces waste. Think before you throw. Use glass jars for storing food such as flour, nuts and dried fruit or for other items such as nails, buttons and office supplies. Reuse paper and plastic bags. Reuse boxes. Give magazines to office waiting rooms, schools or hospitals. Save your packing peanuts and bubble wrap – use them or give them to someone who will.

## Use reusable products instead of single-use products.

Consider not buying single-use items such as paper or plastic cups, plates and utensils – use the real stuff including cloth napkins instead. Use towels, rags and sponges for most cleaning. Just say no to paper or plastic bags at the grocery store. Don't take a bag if you don't need one. Better yet, buy and use your own cloth or canvas bag(s) – even more good news, it won't tear.

Buy rechargeable batteries and a battery charger – you can run almost anything from flashlights to digital cameras on rechargeable batteries and in the long run it is less expensive and helps protect the environment.

## Find new life for old clothes, appliances and furnishings.

Instead of throwing away, consider selling or donating your unwanted stuff to groups and organizations that accept used goods. Consult your telephone directory to see what groups and organizations are in your community.

Do your part. Reduce waste at home. If not you, who?

For more information on waste reduction and recycling, please call the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling visit [www.scdhec.gov/recycle](http://www.scdhec.gov/recycle) or call 1-800-768-7348.



Office of Solid Waste  
Reduction & Recycling

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